Jessica Smith

12/31/11

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Khaled Hosseini

**Summary**: Two and a half years have passed since Mariam and Laila’s failed escape attempt. The Taliban have made their way to Kabul, and new laws have been enacted. Specifically, there are strict laws for the women stating that they are no longer allowed to work and that they must stay in their houses at all times unless accompanied by a male relative. Laila and Rasheed argue over the situation, as Rasheed supports the Taliban’s actions. Laila discovers that she is pregnant again, and contemplates abortion, but in the end is unable to do it. When it is time to deliver the baby Mariam and Laila have a difficult time finding medical attention because Malalai Hospital stopped treating women. They go to Rabia Balkhi where Laila has to undergo a caesarian without anesthetics, and delivers a baby boy, Zalmai. Two years later, the city of Kabul is suffering from a drought. Rasheed dotes on his only son and spoils him with gifts, so that Zalmai begins to almost worship him. Then, Rasheed’s shop is burned down in an accidental fire. The family sells almost all of their possessions. Rasheed takes up a job at a restaurant, but still the money is running out and the family begins to starve. Mariam and Rasheed go to the Intercontinental Hotel so that Mariam can make a phone call. She wishes to find her father Jalil to possibly ask for money. Mariam learns that her father passed away in 1987 and is distraught, having never said goodbye to him. Rasheed decides to send Aziza to an orphanage. Laila is very upset, but reassures Aziza that everything will be okay. Laila and Mariam visit Aziza in the orphanage often, and Aziza tells them all about her life there and what she is learning. One day, they return home to find Tariq at the house.

**Analysis**: The glimmer of hope that once resided in the two women is gone after their failed escape attempt. The new laws in Kabul just reiterate that fact, and they push Laila and Mariam even further under Rasheed’s control. Rasheed seems to be one of the few that appreciates the Taliban and their rules, which shows his sexist attitude. I thought it was interesting that Khaled Hosseini included Laila’s battle with the bicycle spoke. As I said in the last post, I think these actions are not reflective of Laila’s true character, but it may be that her character has changed through her time with Rasheed. Laila herself would never be one to contemplate abortion, but because of her situation with Rasheed, she toyed with the idea. It would have been very surprising if she had actually gone through with it, so I agree with Hosseini’s decision to have Laila keep the baby.

**Application**: The section redefines the roles of women with the laws set by the Taliban. Already, women in Kabul were treated as property of their husbands, but with the new laws they were given no freedom or rights and were forced to stay at home. In Laila’s opinion, one of the most demeaning rules was being forced to wear a burqa, so that their face was completely covered in public. It seemed, especially in Laila’s case, that women were becoming stronger and pushing for their rights up until the Taliban took over. Their rule simply encouraged sexism and mistreatment of women. It also dampened the spirits of the revolutionary women in Kabul and forced them to accept their roles. Sexism today has slowly faded, but it does still exist, and therefore is a mindset that has spanned time and culture.